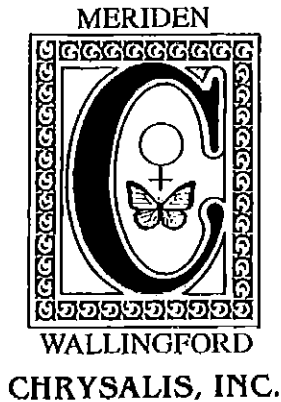


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To: Judiciary and Human Services Committee

From: Linsey Walters, Meriden Wallingford Chrysalis

Date: March 15, 2010

RE: Raised Bill 5497: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Speaker of the House of Representatives' Task Force on Domestic Violence

Good afternoon, Senator McDonald, Senator Doyle, Representative Walker, Representative Lawlor and members of the Human Services and Judiciary Committees. My name is Linsey Walters, I am the Community Services Director for Meriden-Wallingford Chrysalis, Inc. a nonprofit agency serving domestic violence victims in the communities of Meriden and Wallingford. I'm here to testify in support of amending CT General Statute 54-85b to expand employment protections for victims of family violence which is presented in Raised Bill 5497, Sections 13 and 14.

Currently employment protections are limited to granting a victim the right to attend hearings and criminal court proceedings without consequences or threat of penalty or termination. Unfortunately this is not enough, victims need access to support well beyond court-related activities. Family violence victims risk being dismissed from their job if they take unauthorized time for essential advocacy related activities, relocation assistance, and or medical/psychological care. From my own advocacy work with community clients, I've seen this first hand. I currently work with a woman whom has 2 children, she sustains a consistent work history and has moved her way up in the current company she works for. She remains the sole financial supporter for her family and her abusive partner has a track record of being unemployed.

Just before the holidays there was a violent incident where the abuser was arrested, and a protective order was issued which put him out of the home. In addition to participating in multiple hearings for the initial charges and violations of the protective order, my client has had to take time off of work to meet with DCF workers, to apply for and attend restraining order hearings, to file for child support, and to work out visitation and custody agreements. Like all children, her children get sick, have doctor's appointments and school cancellations. Right now this client has used all her personal, vacation and sick days. She is in constant fear of losing her job.

To begin to rebuild a life free of violence, she's accessed therapy and advocacy but often has to miss or reschedule appointments due to child care restraints. Most recently when talking with her, I had suggested looking for support within her company by talking to human resources personnel to explain her situation. She quickly reminded me that she was the human resources personnel and that she was feeling pressure from the owner of the company. She is scared that her work is slipping because of her inability to concentrate and perform her best. She's concerned that her employer will have grounds to let her go.

If this legislation was in place she would have the option of taking time off without fear, she could consistently access needed support to manage through this time, she wouldn't have the added pressure of worrying that if she takes one more day off that she won't have a job to return to. My client is one of many women whom are faced with these challenges. According to the National Employment Law Project, approximately one-quarter of battered women say they had to quit work at least partly due to domestic violence. Please consider my request today to assist victims in getting the help they need while remaining employed. Thank you.